

out any assistance, arrived at conclusions eminently practical and wise. The adaptability of the Native mind is patent, and it will be a tardy act of justice to a noble race if at last it is aided in developing its capacities for the proper administration of its own estates and the guidance of its own destiny. In short, the Natives need advice and assistance for management—not useless litigation.

The Committee of each block should have power to set aside necessary reserves, as fixed on by the owners in runanga assembled. The balance should be leased under regulations to be made by the Native Land Board, and approved by the Governor in Council; the Government alone to have power to lend money to the Board or to individuals.

The District Commissioner should be *ex officio* Chairman of every Committee, responsible for the conduct of business and for the distribution of all moneys.

#### IMPROVED STATE OF AFFAIRS UNDER PROPOSED LEGISLATION.

The Native Land Court and a Native-land law must still exist, because it is necessary that there should be a tribunal powerful enough to decide cases of dispute as a last resort, and a law which shall be binding upon all. But, as now constituted, the Native Land Court and the Native-land laws should cease to operate. The expensive and elaborate surveys now made will be unnecessary under the plans here proposed. The divisional and subdivisinal surveys will also be much simplified. The principal surveys required will be for occupation, as Crown lands are now treated. Tribal boundaries will be defined by natural features, and placed upon the plan by surveyors not for a division of the land, but of the proceeds. So with the boundaries of hapū. The interminable hearings of Native cases in the Native Land Court, with the innumerable attendant evils, will also practically cease. The Maori Committees and runangas will be able generally to decide both as to boundaries and ownership, and the Court will only be called on to decide in extreme cases, and upon the evidence already given before the runanga. As the land can be leased and utilised without having to wait for more than the most general proof of ownership, this need not be hurried. Titles being given by a corporate Board, under regulations having the force of law, there will be no examinations by the Judges into the transaction, no Native Lands Frauds Prevention Courts, no Native deeds, with their necessary accompaniments of fraud, mistake, heavy cost, and much uncertainty. The Maori race may thus be saved, and their lands utilised for the public benefit.

#### OBJECTIONS TO ACT BEING OPTIONAL.

Several witnesses have intimated an opinion that the operation of a new law should be made optional. We do not consider such a course to be either wise or politic. Should a new law be passed it should be imperative, and in no sense optional. The Native character is essentially simple. The principal tribes have given an unmistakable expression of their wishes. To frame a law so that they might or might not come under its jurisdiction, as they pleased, would at once suggest to them that Parliament itself was in doubt as to the wisdom of its Acts. And the influences at work to continue the present system are both numerous and powerful. The law must be simple, but it must be binding.

#### APPOINTMENTS TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

In proposing legislation of a drastic character we are confronted by the danger which will threaten the passage of a Bill absolutely reversing the policy of nearly thirty years. In the House of Representatives the Maori race are, if not fully, at least more adequately represented than they are in the Legislative Council. Of the two Maori members in the second Chamber, one, the Hon. Mr. Taiaroa, although an intelligent and painstaking Councillor, is not held among the Natives of the North Island generally as representing them; but the Hon. Major Ropata stands alone as representing forty thousand Natives owning a large portion of the North Island. Seeing that the whole destiny of the Maori race for good or ill is to be determined; that the laws which affect Maori land are to be discussed, and probably completely changed; the Natives think that they ought to have further and more skilled representation in the Council. They also urge that the European members of that House may, and probably will, require to be advised as to the feeling in the minds of the Natives in regard to the proposed radical changes in the law. They therefore desire us to suggest that two Maori chiefs, selected specially for their knowledge and experience in relation to the Courts and land-laws, might, with great propriety and advantage, be called to the Upper House.